

To: Grantham, Nancy[Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov]
From: StClair, Christie
Sent: Thur 4/14/2016 12:22:56 PM
Subject: Re: NANCY - Fwd: OW, RANDY, R8 ACTION - Daily Caller (DDL COB today): GKM water quality

Not sure it's worth it at this point. Here is the story that he ran:

<http://dailycaller.com/2016/04/14/feds-poison-a-river-with-lead-and-arsenic-still-wont-protect-locals/>

Christie St. Clair
U.S. EPA Office of Media Relations
c: 202-768-5780

On Apr 14, 2016, at 8:15 AM, Grantham, Nancy <Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov> wrote:

Thanks .. so joan should continue the vetting in 8? Thanks ng

From: StClair, Christie
Sent: Thursday, April 14, 2016 8:15 AM
To: Grantham, Nancy <Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov>
Subject: Re: NANCY - Fwd: OW, RANDY, R8 ACTION - Daily Caller (DDL COB today): GKM water quality

No, not without your approval.

Christie St. Clair

U.S. EPA Office of Media Relations

c: 202-768-5780

On Apr 14, 2016, at 7:31 AM, Grantham, Nancy <Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov> wrote:

Did we send a statement last night. Thanks ng

From: StClair, Christie
Sent: Wednesday, April 13, 2016 8:47 PM

To: Grantham, Nancy <Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov>

Subject: Re: NANCY - Fwd: OW, RANDY, R8 ACTION - Daily Caller (DDL COB today): GKM water quality

The question is: To be clear on my second question: the EPA does not have a plan to immediately protect human health and wildlife if measurements during storm events show contaminants reached dangerous levels. Is that correct?

Our answer would be:

"We are going to continue monitoring, fund state and tribal monitoring, and if additional action is required we will take it."

I don't think that responds to the question. It also sets us up to take additional action if water quality is poor. Which it is, because of the broader issues of mine drainage in the region.

Also would we not need to also vet with OLEM and OW before sending this very different new version?

I don't understand why there are any concerns with the original version.

Christie St. Clair

U.S. EPA Office of Media Relations

c: 202-768-5780

On Apr 13, 2016, at 8:40 PM, Grantham, Nancy <Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov> wrote:

See Joan suggestion - I agree it is a better approach thx ng

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Card, Joan" <Card.Joan@epa.gov>
Date: April 13, 2016 at 8:36:12 PM EDT
To: "Grantham, Nancy" <Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov>
Subject: Re: NANCY - Fwd: OW, RANDY, R8 ACTION - Daily Caller (DDL COB today): GKM water quality

IMight be easier to stay our plan is to continue monitoring, fund state tribal plans and and if it indicates specific additional action is required we will take it. It doesn't satisfy people, I know.

Joan Card

Senior Policy Advisor

Region 8

Sent from my EPA iPhone

On Apr 13, 2016, at 6:09 PM, Grantham, Nancy
<Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov> wrote:

What do you think thx ng

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "StClair, Christie" <StClair.Christie@epa.gov>
Date: April 13, 2016 at 7:57:29 PM EDT
To: "Grantham, Nancy" <Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov>
Subject: NANCY - Fwd: OW, RANDY, R8 ACTION - Daily Caller (DDL COB today): GKM water quality

I'd like to go ahead and send without r8 concurrence.

Christie St. Clair

U.S. EPA Office of Media Relations

c: 202-768-5780

Begin forwarded message:

From: "StClair, Christie" <StClair.Christie@epa.gov>
Date: April 13, 2016 at 7:56:27 PM EDT
To: "Card, Joan" <Card.Joan@epa.gov>
Cc: "Wall, Tom" <Wall.Tom@epa.gov>, "Deitz, Randy" <Deitz.Randy@epa.gov>, "Jenkins, Laura Flynn" <Jenkins.Laura@epa.gov>, "Grantham, Nancy" <Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov>, "Loop, Travis" <Loop.Travis@epa.gov>, "Schollhamer, Mary" <Schollhamer.Mary@epa.gov>, "Belle, Kara" <Belle.Kara@epa.gov>, "Wells, Suzanne" <Wells.Suzanne@epa.gov>, "Mattas-Curry, Lahne" <Mattas-Curry.Lahne@epa.gov>, "Evans, David" <Evans.David@epa.gov>, "Bravo, Antonio" <Bravo.Antonio@epa.gov>, "Holdsworth, Susan" <Holdsworth.Susan@epa.gov>
Subject: Re: OW, RANDY, R8 ACTION - Daily Caller (DDL COB today): GKM water quality

His story is posting tonight and will say we have no plan for water quality spikes.

This is the response we'd like to send right away:

EPA does not anticipate any threats to human health or wildlife that are greater than what the watershed has historically experienced.

Christie St. Clair

U.S. EPA Office of Media Relations

c: 202-768-5780

On Apr 13, 2016, at 7:54 PM, Card, Joan <Card.Joan@epa.gov> wrote:

I don't expect it will come tonight, but perhaps. Please be

sure to point out new language so Laura and I can get it to the right folks.

Joan Card

Senior Policy Advisor

Region 8

Sent from my EPA iPhone

On Apr 13, 2016, at 5:51 PM, StClair, Christie
<StClair.Christie@epa.gov> wrote:

No we need r8 concurrence asap please

Christie St. Clair

U.S. EPA Office of Media Relations

c: 202-768-5780

On Apr 13, 2016, at 7:50 PM, Card, Joan
<Card.Joan@epa.gov> wrote:

Christie or Laura, our folks have vetted that statement, correct?

Joan Card

Senior Policy Advisor

Region 8

Sent from my EPA iPhone

On Apr 13, 2016, at 3:50 PM, Wall, Tom
<Wall.Tom@epa.gov> wrote:

Will defer to Region 8 and ORD re: this statement though, based on my limited experience it seems reasonable:

From: Deitz, Randy
Sent: Wednesday, April 13, 2016 5:47 PM
To: StClair, Christie
<StClair.Christie@epa.gov>; Jenkins, Laura Flynn <Jenkins.Laura@epa.gov>; Card, Joan <Card.Joan@epa.gov>; Grantham, Nancy <Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov>; Wall, Tom <Wall.Tom@epa.gov>; Loop, Travis <Loop.Travis@epa.gov>; Schollhamer, Mary <Schollhamer.Mary@epa.gov>; Belle, Kara <Belle.Kara@epa.gov>; Wells, Suzanne <Wells.Suzanne@epa.gov>; Mattas-Curry, Lahne <Mattas-Curry.Lahne@epa.gov>
Subject: RE: OW, RANDY, R8 ACTION - Daily Caller (DDL COB today): GKM water quality

I think that is an accurate statement, but I will defer to my colleagues more familiar with ongoing sampling. I would remove the word “any”.

EPA does not anticipate any threats to human health or wildlife that are greater than what the watershed has historically experienced. Local authorities have response protocols in place for high-flow events. San Juan Basin Health Department, for example, recently performed a notification exercise for just that type of scenario.

Randy Deitz

Attorney Advisor

Office of Land and Emergency
Management

(202) 566-0197

From: StClair, Christie

Sent: Wednesday, April 13, 2016 5:33
PM

To: Jenkins, Laura Flynn

<Jenkins.Laura@epa.gov>; Card, Joan
<Card.Joan@epa.gov>; Grantham, Nancy
<Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov>; Wall, Tom
<Wall.Tom@epa.gov>; Deitz, Randy
<Deitz.Randy@epa.gov>; Loop, Travis
<Loop.Travis@epa.gov>; Schollhamer,
Mary <Schollhamer.Mary@epa.gov>;
Belle, Kara <Belle.Kara@epa.gov>;
Wells, Suzanne
<Wells.Suzanne@epa.gov>; Mattas-
Curry, Lahne <[Mattas-
Curry.Lahne@epa.gov](mailto:Mattas-Curry.Lahne@epa.gov)>

Subject: RE: OW, RANDY, R8
ACTION - Daily Caller (DDL COB
today): GKM water quality

Since the MSI study isn't public and the ORD
study isn't final yet, and this is due today for a
story running tonight, I'd like to keep this
simple.

Could we do something along these lines:

EPA does not anticipate any threats to human health or wildlife that are greater than what the watershed has historically experienced. Local authorities have response protocols in place for high-flow events. San Juan Basin Health Department, for example, recently performed a notification exercise for just that type of scenario.

Christie St. Clair

Office of Public Affairs

Environmental Protection Agency

Washington, DC

o: 202-564-2880

m: 202-768-5780

From: Jenkins, Laura Flynn

Sent: Wednesday, April 13, 2016 4:45 PM

To: StClair, Christie

<StClair.Christie@epa.gov>; Card, Joan

<Card.Joan@epa.gov>; Grantham, Nancy

<Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov>; Wall, Tom

<Wall.Tom@epa.gov>; Deitz, Randy

<Deitz.Randy@epa.gov>; Loop, Travis

<Loop.Travis@epa.gov>; Schollhamer,

Mary <Schollhamer.Mary@epa.gov>;

Belle, Kara <Belle.Kara@epa.gov>;

Wells, Suzanne

<Wells.Suzanne@epa.gov>

Subject: RE: OW, RANDY, R8

ACTION - Daily Caller (DDL COB today): GKM water quality

I'll defer to those with more expertise than me for specifics but it seems like we could use one or more these approaches:

1. State upfront that we do not anticipate a threat to human health or wildlife during high flow events (e.g., dilution factor in play) and then cite ORD study/MSI report/other studies indicating spring runoff is expected to be similar to previous years
2. Specifically refute assumption that we don't have a plan, as well as assumption that we will do nothing
 - a. Reference local response protocols for high flow events, e.g., SJBHD's notification process that was recently exercised; while also explaining the roles/responsibilities of local health departments in these types of situations
 - b. Reference our existing monitoring plan and notification procedures

Not super helpful but this is clearly a loaded question and I think correcting his erroneous assumptions straight-on is always a wise choice wit this reporter.

Laura Jenkins

Media Officer

USEPA-Region 8

1595 Wynkoop St.

Mailcode: 8-OC

Denver, CO 80202

Landline: 303-312-6256

Cell: 202-360-8453

Fax: 303-312-6961

From: StClair, Christie

Sent: Wednesday, April 13, 2016 1:52 PM

To: Card, Joan <Card.Joan@epa.gov>

Cc: Grantham, Nancy
<Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov>; Wall, Tom
<Wall.Tom@epa.gov>; Jenkins, Laura
Flynn <Jenkins.Laura@epa.gov>; Deitz,
Randy <Deitz.Randy@epa.gov>; Loop,
Travis <Loop.Travis@epa.gov>;
Schollhamer, Mary
<Schollhamer.Mary@epa.gov>; Belle,
Kara <Belle.Kara@epa.gov>; Wells,
Suzanne <Wells.Suzanne@epa.gov>
Subject: RE: OW, RANDY, R8
ACTION - Daily Caller (DDL COB
today): GKM water quality

All, please send me your thoughts on how best to respond to this follow-up from the reporter:

To be clear on my second question: the EPA does not have a plan to immediately protect human health and wildlife if measurements during storm events show contaminants reached dangerous levels. Is that correct?

Thanks,
Christie

Christie St. Clair

Office of Public Affairs

Environmental Protection Agency

Washington, DC

o: 202-564-2880

m: 202-768-5780

From: StClair, Christie

Sent: Wednesday, April 13, 2016 2:54 PM

To: Card, Joan <Card.Joan@epa.gov>

Cc: Grantham, Nancy
<Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov>; Wall, Tom
<Wall.Tom@epa.gov>; Jenkins, Laura
Flynn <Jenkins.Laura@epa.gov>; Deitz,
Randy <Deitz.Randy@epa.gov>; Loop,
Travis <Loop.Travis@epa.gov>;
Schollhamer, Mary
<Schollhamer.Mary@epa.gov>; Belle,
Kara <Belle.Kara@epa.gov>; Wells,
Suzanne <Wells.Suzanne@epa.gov>

Subject: RE: OW, RANDY, R8
ACTION - Daily Caller (DDL COB
today): GKM water quality

Thanks, everybody, for your help. Below is
the final I'll send.

1. I understand that part of the monitoring plan at the Animas River involves monitoring contaminant levels during storms events. Does this monitoring also include the San Juan River?

Yes. All monitoring sites are listed in the final plan, which is on the Gold King Mine response site. Here is the document's url:
https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-03/documents/post-gkm-final-conceptual-monitoring-plan_2016_03_24_16.pdf

You'll find the sites listed on pages 13-15.

2. Does the EPA have a plan to protect human and wildlife health if that monitoring shows spiked contaminant levels during storm events?

Historically, the Animas River has an elevated "normal" (pre-event) level of metals independent of the Gold King Mine release, due to the constant supply of acid mine drainage into the river from many sources.

Acid mine drainage has been released into the rivers for many decades and winter runoff and major storms may kick up material that had settled to the bottom of the rivers. So those using the river for recreation, agriculture or drinking water should use the same precautions they always have.

The EPA is currently working with state, local

and tribal stakeholders to address long-term solutions, including recently proposing the Bonita Peak Mining District to the National Priorities List (NPL).

There may be occasions when the metal concentrations fluctuate from time to time because of water surges due to heavy rains or other events that may change the water flow rates or volume, but ~~this should not diminish the fact that~~ the river system as a whole is being maintained at pre-event conditions. We have released a monitoring plan to determine any longer term impacts and are currently working with local and state stakeholders to implement those efforts.

Here is some additional background on the region you may find useful.

EPA and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) conducted a Superfund Site Assessment of the area in the 1990s. The assessment showed that water quality standards were not achieved in the Animas River near Silverton and identified the severe impacts to aquatic life in the Upper Animas and its tributaries from naturally occurring and mining-related heavy metals. In recognition of the community-based collaborative effort, EPA agreed to postpone adding all or a portion of the site to the Superfund NPL, as long as progress was being made to improve the water quality of the Animas River. Until approximately 2005, water quality in the Animas River was improving. However, since 2005, water quality in the Animas River has not improved and, for at least 20 miles below the confluence with Cement Creek and the water quality has declined significantly. Impacts to aquatic life were also demonstrated by fish population surveys conducted by Colorado Parks and Wildlife, which found no fish in the Animas River below Cement Creek for approximately two miles and observed precipitous declines in fish populations as far as 20 miles downstream since 2005. Because of this declining water quality in the Animas River, in

2008, EPA's Superfund Site Assessment program began investigations in Upper Cement Creek focused on evaluating whether the Upper Cement Creek area alone would qualify for inclusion on the NPL. This evaluation indicated that the area would qualify, although after receiving additional community input, EPA postponed efforts to include the area on the National Priorities List. Since that time, EPA has continued and broadened its investigations of conditions at the site in order to understand the major sources of heavy metal contamination in the Upper Animas. SITE RISK: Mining operations have greatly disturbed the land, adding to existing highly mineralized conditions in many areas of the site. Mineralized waste rock exposed to air and water causes acidic conditions to mobilize the release of heavy metals to the surrounding environment. These heavy metals have found their way into the Animas River and its tributaries and have eventually traveled farther downstream.

3. How long will it take to complete cleaning at the Bonita Pike Mining District and how much will it cost? Additionally, what are the time and cost estimates to finish cleaning just Gold King Mine and the Animas River?

Prior to completing an RI/FS, EPA will not know what the site's cleanup scope will be, and, therefore, we can't estimate how long cleanup actions will take. At all sites, the length of time to complete all remediation work depends on a number of site specific factors. For example, it's hard to predict what year the remedial investigation and feasibility study will be done, how many other sites will be in the queue for funding that year, and whether there will be one or more PRPs helping pay for the cleanup. We also don't know yet what the exact problems are, and what the remedies should be --- that information, which will be included in the remediation proposal, will ultimately determine project cost and timeline.

Christie St. Clair

Office of Public Affairs

Environmental Protection Agency

Washington, DC

o: 202-564-2880

m: 202-768-5780

From: Card, Joan

Sent: Wednesday, April 13, 2016 2:50 PM

To: StClair, Christie

[<StClair.Christie@epa.gov>](mailto:StClair.Christie@epa.gov)

Cc: Grantham, Nancy

[<Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov>](mailto:Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov); Wall, Tom

[<Wall.Tom@epa.gov>](mailto:Wall.Tom@epa.gov); Jenkins, Laura Flynn

[<Jenkins.Laura@epa.gov>](mailto:Jenkins.Laura@epa.gov); Deitz, Randy

[<Deitz.Randy@epa.gov>](mailto:Deitz.Randy@epa.gov); Loop, Travis

[<Loop.Travis@epa.gov>](mailto:Loop.Travis@epa.gov); Schollhamer, Mary

[<Schollhamer.Mary@epa.gov>](mailto:Schollhamer.Mary@epa.gov); Belle, Kara

[<Belle.Kara@epa.gov>](mailto:Belle.Kara@epa.gov); Wells, Suzanne

[<Wells.Suzanne@epa.gov>](mailto:Wells.Suzanne@epa.gov)

Subject: Re: OW, RANDY, R8 ACTION -
Daily Caller (DDL COB today): GKM water
quality

Having heard no other input from LT, ok.

Joan Card

Senior Policy Advisor

Region 8

Sent from my EPA iPhone

On Apr 13, 2016, at 1:45 PM, StClair, Christie
<StClair.Christie@epa.gov> wrote:

Joan, does R8 concur with the version
below?

Christie St. Clair

Office of Public Affairs

Environmental Protection Agency

Washington, DC

o: 202-564-2880

m: 202-768-5780

From: Card, Joan
Sent: Wednesday, April 13, 2016 2:33 PM
To: Grantham, Nancy
<Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov>
Cc: Wall, Tom <Wall.Tom@epa.gov>;
StClair, Christie
<StClair.Christie@epa.gov>; Jenkins,
Laura Flynn <Jenkins.Laura@epa.gov>;
Deitz, Randy <Deitz.Randy@epa.gov>;
Loop, Travis <Loop.Travis@epa.gov>;
Schollhamer, Mary
<Schollhamer.Mary@epa.gov>; Belle,
Kara <Belle.Kara@epa.gov>; Wells,
Suzanne <Wells.Suzanne@epa.gov>
Subject: Re: OW, RANDY, R8 ACTION -
Daily Caller (DDL COB today): GKM
water quality

Now I see that deletion. Thanks.

Joan Card

Senior Policy Advisor

Region 8

Sent from my EPA iPhone

On Apr 13, 2016, at 1:31 PM,
Grantham, Nancy
<Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov> wrote:

I agree – it leans too far in .. in my
view.

Thanks ng

From: Wall, Tom
Sent: Wednesday, April 13, 2016
2:31 PM
To: StClair, Christie
<StClair.Christie@epa.gov>;
Jenkins, Laura Flynn
<Jenkins.Laura@epa.gov>; Card,
Joan <Card.Joan@epa.gov>;
Deitz, Randy
<Deitz.Randy@epa.gov>
Cc: Loop, Travis
<Loop.Travis@epa.gov>;
Schollhamer, Mary
<Schollhamer.Mary@epa.gov>;
Grantham, Nancy
<Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov>;
Belle, Kara
<Belle.Kara@epa.gov>; Wells,
Suzanne
<Wells.Suzanne@epa.gov>
Subject: RE: OW, RANDY, R8
ACTION - Daily Caller (DDL COB
today): GKM water quality

Defer to Region 8 and ORD, but I think it's safer to omit this sentence, which is shown as struck in the proposed text below:

~~**The metals detected from the August 5th release are no different in content than what would be expected from historical discharges.**~~

Tom W.

From: StClair, Christie
Sent: Wednesday, April 13, 2016 2:18 PM
To: Jenkins, Laura Flynn
<Jenkins.Laura@epa.gov>; Wall, Tom <Wall.Tom@epa.gov>; Card, Joan <Card.Joan@epa.gov>; Deitz, Randy <Deitz.Randy@epa.gov>
Cc: Loop, Travis <Loop.Travis@epa.gov>; Schollhamer, Mary <Schollhamer.Mary@epa.gov>; Grantham, Nancy <Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov>; Belle, Kara <Belle.Kara@epa.gov>; Wells, Suzanne <Wells.Suzanne@epa.gov>
Subject: RE: OW, RANDY, R8 ACTION - Daily Caller (DDL COB today): GKM water quality

Some tweaks below. GTG from R8? OW?

Christie St. Clair

Office of Public Affairs

Environmental Protection Agency

Washington, DC

o: 202-564-2880

m: 202-768-5780

From: Jenkins, Laura Flynn
Sent: Wednesday, April 13, 2016
1:41 PM
To: StClair, Christie
<StClair.Christie@epa.gov>; Wall,
Tom <Wall.Tom@epa.gov>; Card,
Joan <Card.Joan@epa.gov>;
Deitz, Randy
<Deitz.Randy@epa.gov>
Cc: Loop, Travis
<Loop.Travis@epa.gov>;
Schollhamer, Mary
<Schollhamer.Mary@epa.gov>;
Grantham, Nancy
<Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov>;
Belle, Kara
<Belle.Kara@epa.gov>; Wells,
Suzanne
<Wells.Suzanne@epa.gov>
Subject: RE: OW, RANDY, R8
ACTION - Daily Caller (DDL COB
today): GKM water quality

Christie:

I found the 1st part of the response to #2 a bit confusing so embedded some language from a similar response that might work. The language I embedded was previously vetted – however – it was written before the monitoring plan was finalized so I updated it to reflect that change. OW/ORD should also confirm that the following sentence is still accurate and, if not, it should be stricken:
The metals detected from the August 5th release are no

*different in content than what
would be expected from
historical discharges.*

Thanks for the chance to review.

Laura Jenkins

Media Officer

USEPA-Region 8

1595 Wynkoop St.

Mailcode: 8-OC

Denver, CO 80202

Landline: 303-312-6256

Cell: 202-360-8453

Fax: 303-312-6961

From: StClair, Christie

Sent: Wednesday, April 13, 2016
11:00 AM

To: Wall, Tom

<Wall.Tom@epa.gov>; Card, Joan

<Card.Joan@epa.gov>; Jenkins,
Laura Flynn

<Jenkins.Laura@epa.gov>; Deitz,

Randy <Deitz.Randy@epa.gov>

Cc: Loop, Travis

<Loop.Travis@epa.gov>;

Schollhamer, Mary

<Schollhamer.Mary@epa.gov>;

Grantham, Nancy

<Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov>;

Belle, Kara

<Belle.Kara@epa.gov>; Wells,

Suzanne

<Wells.Suzanne@epa.gov>

Subject: OW, RANDY, R8

ACTION - Daily Caller (DDL COB
today): GKM water quality

Ethan Barton is looking for our response on this by end of today. We've addressed most of this previously, so I'm just looking for OW, OLEM IO, and R8 approval before sending.

1. I understand that part of the monitoring plan at the Animas River involves monitoring contaminant levels during storms events. Does this monitoring also include the San Juan River?

[OW review – this is a new response] Yes. All monitoring sites are listed in the final plan, which is on the Gold King Mine response site. Here is the document's url:
https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-03/documents/post-gkm-final-conceptual-monitoring-plan_2016_03_24_16.pdf

You'll find the sites listed on pages 13-15.

2. Does the EPA have a plan to protect human and wildlife health if that monitoring shows spiked contaminant levels during storm events?

[Do R8 or OW have anything to add? This is from previous responses, and the fact sheet on the GKM site.] Historically, the Animas River has an elevated

“normal” (pre-event) level of metals independent of the Gold King Mine release, due to the constant supply of acid mine drainage into the river from many sources. There are literally hundreds of old mines, ore processing locations and other places where acid mine drainage containing metals enters small streams and creeks that ultimately enter the Animas River.

Acid mine drainage has been released into the rivers for many decades and winter runoff and major storms may kick up material that had settled to the bottom of the rivers. So those using the river for recreation, agriculture or drinking water should use the same precautions they always have.

The EPA is currently working with state, local and tribal stakeholders to address long-term solutions to the acid mine drainage discharging into the Upper Animas watershed, including **recently proposing the Bonita Peak Mining District to the National Priorities List (NPL)** a proposed NPL listing,

Please note that water discharge from several mines in this area have been flowing into the Animas and San Juan river system for over 100 years. The metals detected from the August 5th release are no different in content than what would be expected from historical discharges. Results of samples taken subsequent to the release indicate that metal concentrations in the surface waters and sediments have been generally at those pre-

~~event conditions. It should be noted that~~ ***There may be occasions when the metal concentrations fluctuate from time to time because of water surges due to heavy rains or other events that may change the water flow rates or volume, but this should not diminish the fact that the river system as a whole is being maintained at pre-event conditions. We have released a monitoring plan to determine any longer term impacts and are currently working with local and state stakeholders to implement those efforts.***

Here is some additional background on the region you may find useful.

EPA and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) conducted a Superfund Site Assessment of the area in the 1990s. The assessment showed that water quality standards were not achieved in the Animas River near Silverton and identified the severe impacts to aquatic life in the Upper Animas and its tributaries from naturally occurring and mining-related heavy metals. In recognition of the community-based collaborative effort, EPA agreed to postpone adding all or a portion of the site to the Superfund NPL, as long as progress was being made to improve the water quality of the Animas River. Until approximately 2005, water quality in the Animas River was improving. However, since 2005, water quality in the Animas River has not improved and, for at least 20 miles below the confluence with

Cement Creek and the water quality has declined significantly. Impacts to aquatic life were also demonstrated by fish population surveys conducted by Colorado Parks and Wildlife, which found no fish in the Animas River below Cement Creek for approximately two miles and observed precipitous declines in fish populations as far as 20 miles downstream since 2005. Because of this declining water quality in the Animas River, in 2008, EPA's Superfund Site Assessment program began investigations in Upper Cement Creek focused on evaluating whether the Upper Cement Creek area alone would qualify for inclusion on the NPL. This evaluation indicated that the area would qualify, although after receiving additional community input, EPA postponed efforts to include the area on the National Priorities List. Since that time, EPA has continued and broadened its investigations of conditions at the site in order to understand the major sources of heavy metal contamination in the Upper Animas. SITE RISK: Mining operations have greatly disturbed the land, adding to existing highly mineralized conditions in many areas of the site. Mineralized waste rock exposed to air and water causes acidic conditions to mobilize the release of heavy metals to the surrounding environment. These heavy metals have found their way into the Animas River and its tributaries and have eventually traveled farther downstream.

3. How long will it take to complete cleaning at the Bonita Pike Mining District and how much will it cost? Additionally, what are the time and cost

**estimates to finish cleaning just
Gold King Mine and the Animas
River?**

[OLEM review – ok to use language from previous responses?.] Prior to completing an RI/FS, EPA will not know what the site's cleanup scope will be, and, therefore, we can't estimate how long cleanup actions will take. At all sites, the length of time to complete all remediation work depends on a number of site specific factors. For example, it's hard to predict what year the remedial investigation and feasibility study will be done, how many other sites will be in the queue for funding that year, and whether there will be one or more PRPs helping pay for the cleanup. We also don't know yet what the exact problems are, and what the remedies should be --- that information, which will be included in the remediation proposal, will ultimately determine project cost and timeline.

**EPA does not
anticipate any threats to
human health or wildlife that
are greater than what the
watershed has historically
experienced.**

Christie St. Clair

Office of Public Affairs

Environmental Protection Agency

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